



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Edinburgh Research Explorer

Authenticity and Self-Knowledge

Citation for published version:

Feldman, SD & Hazlett, A 2013, 'Authenticity and Self-Knowledge', *Dialectica*, vol. 67, no. 2, pp. 157-181.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/1746-8361.12022>

Digital Object Identifier (DOI):

[10.1111/1746-8361.12022](https://doi.org/10.1111/1746-8361.12022)

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Peer reviewed version

Published In:

Dialectica

Publisher Rights Statement:

© S. D. Feldman and A. Hazlett, 2013. Feldman, S. D., & Hazlett, A. (2013). Authenticity and Self-Knowledge. *Dialectica*

General rights

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact openaccess@ed.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.



Authenticity and Self-Knowledge

Simon D. FELDMAN and Allan HAZLETT

ABSTRACT: We argue that the value of authenticity does not explain the value of self-knowledge. There are a plurality of species of authenticity; in this paper we consider four species: avoiding pretense (§2), Frankfurtian wholeheartedness (§3), existential self-knowledge (§4), and spontaneity (§4). Our thesis is that, for each of these species, the value of (that species of) authenticity does not (partially) explain the value of self-knowledge. Moreover, when it comes to spontaneity, the value of (that species of) authenticity conflicts with the value of self-knowledge.

A contemporary slogan, a favorite of self-help gurus, enjoins you to “be yourself,” implying the value of authenticity. The Delphic motto, a favorite of philosophers, enjoins you to “know thyself,” implying the value of self-knowledge. What is the relationship between the value of authenticity and the value of self-knowledge? Can the value of one explain the value of the other?

“Authenticity” is ambiguous in a variety of ways: representations are said to be authentic when they are accurate, cuisines are said to be authentic when they resemble some paradigm, and people are said to be authentic when they are “true to themselves.” It is this personal sense of “authentic” with which we are concerned here.

There has recently been renewed interest in the value of knowledge and in the sources of epistemic normativity (Kornblith 1993, Zagzebski 1996, 2003, 2004, Sosa 2003, 2007, Kvanvig 2003, Grimm 2009, Greco 2010, Pritchard 2010, Hazlett 2013).

Epistemologists have asked (among other evaluative questions): why think that knowledge is valuable? What explains the value of knowledge? Michael Lynch (2004) argues that the value of knowledge¹ can be explained, in part, by appeal to the value of authenticity: for Lynch, the value of authenticity partially explains the value of self-knowledge. If his argument succeeds, it is important for the debate about the value of knowledge. For it is widely assumed that authenticity is valuable. As Charles Taylor (1991) argues, contemporary common sense conceives of the authentic life as a “better or higher mode of life,” and as “a standard of what we ought to desire.” (p. 16) An inauthentic life, on this view, is one that would be “wasted or unfulfilled.” (p. 17) If we can explain the value of knowledge by appeal to the value of authenticity, then, the value of knowledge will be based on a solid foundation.

Even when we confine ourselves to the personal sense of “authenticity,” the term remains ambiguous. There are a plurality of species of authenticity; in this paper we consider four species: avoiding pretense (§2), Frankfurtian wholeheartedness (with which Lynch identifies authenticity) (§3), existential self-knowledge (§4), and spontaneity (§4). Our thesis is that, for each of these species, the value of (that species of) authenticity does not partially explain the value of self-knowledge. Moreover, when it comes to spontaneity, the value of (that species of) authenticity conflicts with the value of self-knowledge. We conclude that Lynch’s suggestion, to explain the value of self-knowledge by appeal to the value of authenticity, is not promising.

¹ Lynch’s focus is on true belief. The differential value of knowledge and true belief is not our concern here and can be ignored. We assume that true belief is a constituent of knowledge.

1 Preliminaries

This section lays the ground for our argument, by clarifying what we mean by saying that there are species of authenticity (§1.1), considering the value of authenticity (§1.2), distinguishing between causal and constitutive accounts of the relationship between self-knowledge and authenticity (§1.3), and distinguishing between the value of self-knowledge and the value of self-inquiry.

1.1 Species of authenticity

We said that there are four species of authenticity:

- Avoiding pretense (§2)
- Frankfurtian wholeheartedness (§3)
- Existential self-knowledge (§4)
- Spontaneity (§5)

Each of these will be explained in the relevant section, below. By saying that there are species of authenticity, we mean to capture the fact that “authenticity” is ambiguous. When you say that someone is “authentic,” even when it is clear that you mean that she is true to herself, you have not yet made clear what you mean. Our four species of authenticity provide possible answers to the question of what you mean when you say that someone is “authentic.”

We’ve chosen to speak of “species of authenticity”; each of the four species could rightly be called “authenticity.” You might choose to treat what we are calling “species” of authenticity as competitors for the title of genuine or real authenticity. If you go that route, there will be four competing theories or conceptions of authenticity: a theory on which authenticity is avoiding pretense, a theory on which authenticity is Frankfurtian wholeheartedness, and so on. The assumption that there are species of authenticity, rather than competing theories of authenticity, won’t effect our argument in this paper. And it is fine to speak of conceptions of authenticity, on our view, where this doesn’t imply competing conceptions.

You might be skeptical of the value of some of these species of authenticity. So, for example, you might wonder whether, or in what sense, it is good to be wholehearted. For the purposes of our argument here, we will grant the value of avoiding pretense, as well as the value of wholeheartedness, existential self-knowledge, and spontaneity. If any of these things is not valuable, then so much the worse for the project of explaining the value of self-knowledge by appeal to the value of authenticity.

Are there other species of authenticity? If there were not, our argument would be stronger: we would be able to say that, for each of these species, the value of (that species of) authenticity does not partially explain the value of self-knowledge, and since there are no other species of authenticity, the value of authenticity does not partially explain the value of self-knowledge. But it would be premature to preclude the possibility of other species of authenticity – i.e. other things that might rightly be called “authenticity.” So our conclusion poses a challenge to the philosopher who would defend the value of self-knowledge by appeal to the value of authenticity: to articulate a conception of authenticity on which the value of authenticity does explain the value of self-knowledge.

1.2 The value of authenticity

To say that x is valuable leaves open questions about the species of value x is said to enjoy. If we were to explain the value of self-knowledge by appeal to the value of authenticity, then self-knowledge could be said to enjoy whatever species of value authenticity enjoys. Lynch (2004) argues that the value of authenticity derives from its connection with wellbeing or the good life. He argues (cf. §2) that self-knowledge is constitutive of “having a sense of self,” and that this in turn is constitutive of “self-respect,” and that “self-respect seems to be what Rawls calls a “primary good,” or basic component of human happiness.” (p. 124) The value in question is “constitutive value,” i.e. that possessed by something in virtue of being an “essential *part* of something that is good,” e.g. “a happy flourishing life.” (p. 127) This value of authenticity is value in virtue of its connection with the **wellbeing** (happiness, the good life, flourishing) of the authentic person, which we’ll call **eudaimonic value**. And this is the species of value we’ll primarily be concerned with here.²

1.3 Causal vs. constitutive accounts

An account of the value of self-knowledge that appeals to the value of authenticity must maintain some connection between self-knowledge and authenticity. We need to distinguish between two kinds of account. On a **constitutive account** of the connection between authenticity and self-knowledge, self-knowledge is (at least) a *part* of authenticity. On the assumption that authenticity is finally valuable (i.e. valuable for its own sake), it could then be argued that self-knowledge is finally valuable as well, in as much as it is (at least) a partial constituent of something finally valuable (namely, authenticity). On a **causal account** of the connection between authenticity and self-knowledge, self-knowledge (generally, typically, normally) *causes* authenticity. It could then be argued that self-knowledge is instrumentally valuable vis-à-vis the (distinct) end of authenticity.

1.4 Self-knowledge vs. self-inquiry

We can distinguish between the value of knowledge and the value of inquiry. In general, if it is valuable to know whether p , then it will be valuable to inquire about whether p , in virtue of the fact that inquiry is a means to the end of knowledge. But the relationship between the value of knowledge and the value of inquiry is complex. The disvalue of inquiry about whether p might trump the value of knowing whether p , as when acquiring knowledge about some question is not worth the cost of inquiry about that question. And there might be species of inquiry that are valuable, independent of their status as means to the end of knowledge; inquiry itself, you might think, is sometimes valuable for its own sake.

However, we shall assume that maintaining the value of self-knowledge commits one to the value of self-inquiry, i.e. inquiry aimed at acquiring self-knowledge. Maintaining the value of x does not always commit one to the value of seeking x . There might be (economically) valuable gold in the hills, but seeking said gold might be (economically) disvaluable, because of the costs of extracting it. Someone could consistently defend the

² We have argued (2013, §5) that inauthenticity is sometimes **morally** problematic because it sometimes involves lying to or misleading other people (cf. Trilling 1972, pp. 3-6). The arguments of this paper could be advanced, with moral value in the place of eudaimonic value. See also Feldman forthcoming.

value of self-knowledge, but advise against the policy of seeking self-knowledge and thus reject the value of self-inquiry. But this would be a curious position. The affirmation of the value of self-knowledge would provide no advice or guidance. Most philosophers who would defend the value of self-knowledge seek to explain, by appeal to the value of self-knowledge, the value of such knowledge-directed intellectual virtues as inquisitiveness, curiosity, intellectual honesty, intellectual integrity, and so on. And as the compelling prescription of the Delphic motto suggests, it is natural for those who value self-knowledge to value self-inquiry. So we assume that maintaining the value of self-knowledge commits one to the value of self-inquiry.

Our focus in this paper will be on connections between authenticity and self-knowledge, but when self-inquiry is relevant – in particular, when there are potential conflicts between authenticity and self-inquiry (§2.2, §5.2) – we will discuss self-inquiry.

2 Authenticity as avoiding pretense

To be authentic is to be true to yourself. What does it mean to be “true to yourself”? One possible answer is that to be authentic is to avoid pretense, and thus that a person is authentic just to the extent that she avoids pretense.³ Consider David Velleman’s (2002) “paradigm case of inauthenticity”: the poseur who “in general conforms himself to the demands and expectations of others.” (p. 97) The authentic person, by contrast, does not conform to the demands and expectations of others; rather, she conforms to *her own* demands and expectations: she acts as she wants to act, not as other people want her to act. So authenticity, on this conception, amounts to avoiding pretense, and the relevant species of self-knowledge is knowledge of your own desires. In this section we argue that, on this conception, there is no plausible connection between self-knowledge and authenticity.

2.1 Self-knowledge and avoiding pretense

While it might be the case that conforming to the demands and expectations of others requires knowing what those demands and expectations are, this is not the case when it comes to conforming to your own demands and expectations. To act as other people want you to act, you must first know how other people want you to act; but to act as you want to act, you need not know how you want yourself to act, because your own desires, unlike the desires of other people, can motivate action without your knowing that they are your desires.⁴ Knowledge of others is required to be a poseur, but knowledge of yourself is not required simply to be yourself. So self-knowledge is, at least, not a constituent of avoiding pretense.⁵

However, might we conceive of authenticity as avoiding pretense, and offer a causal account of the connection between authenticity and self-knowledge? Granted that knowledge of what you want is not required for avoiding pretense, you might still argue that knowledge of what you want is a generally reliable means of making it the case that you avoid pretense.

³ See Feldman and Hazlett 2013, §2 and §5.

⁴ We assume here, and in what follows, that it is characteristic of desires that they motivate action. See footnote 11.

⁵ In more metaphorical language, someone’s actions might be expressions of her “true self,” or who she “really” is, even if she does not know her “true self,” or who she “really” is.

Such self-knowledge is not the *only* reliable means of avoiding pretense. A naïve person, uncorrupted by social expectations, might be authentic, in this sense, without any self-knowledge about her desires. Reliable authenticity without self-knowledge seems possible. But, still, perhaps knowing what you want is *more* reliable, in general, than not knowing what you want, when it comes to bringing about the goal of avoiding pretense.

But why think that this is the case? In general, and in the paradigmatic case of action that is based on desire, action is caused by desire, not by knowledge of desire. I want nourishment, I know that eating this bread will bring nourishment, and so I eat this bread. That's the paradigm case. Knowledge that I want nourishment isn't necessary to bring about my action, for two reasons. First, I might eat without knowing that I want nourishment, in the event that I am unreflective and not thinking about my own desires, while I eat. Second, such knowledge seems causally irrelevant to the action I perform: a desire for nourishment, coupled with knowledge that eating will bring nourishment, is enough to explain the fact that I eat, even if I do happen to know that I want nourishment. We conclude that there is no close connection between knowledge of your desires and avoiding pretense.

We can be misled into thinking that knowing what we want is more reliable, in general, than not knowing what we want, when it comes to bringing about the goal of avoiding pretense, by thinking about authenticity in terms of the "true self."⁶ On this picture, two sorts of desires compete to bring about your actions: those of your "true self" and those of other people ("the demands and expectations of others") or of various "false selves," i.e. inauthentic identities that you are tempted to pretend to be. Think here of the idea of discovering "who you really are." This can suggest a picture on which there is a distinction between who you "really" are and who you actually are, and thus between your "real" desires and those that you actually have. Once this picture is adopted, the need for self-knowledge seems obvious. Because your "real" desires may not be desires that you actually have, they cannot be expected to bring about action in the manner of actual desires, where (as we argued above) in the paradigm case desire brings about action without knowledge of desire. It seems then that the only way to bring it about that your actions reflect your "real" desires is to become aware of them. Whereas in the paradigm case desire (for nourishment) and belief (that eating will bring nourishment) conspire to produce action, in the ideal case (on the present proposal), knowledge of "real" desire (i.e. for what my "true self" wants) and belief (about how to obtain what my "true self" wants) will conspire to produce action. The motivational efficacy of your actual desires does not depend on whether you know about them or not, but the motivational efficacy of your "real" desires does so depend.

But we should not adopt this misleading picture, with its metaphysically dubious notion of the "true self," with its "real" desires. There may be something to these distinctions, but the language of the "true self" is metaphorical, at best. Can we cash out this metaphor in non-metaphorical terms?

One possibility is that talking about your "real" desires and your actual desires is just a metaphorical way of talking about your desires and the desires of other people, as suggested by Velleman's case of the poseur. But, as we argued above, there is no reason to think that there is a connection between knowing about your desires and being

⁶ This picture is not explicitly defended in the philosophical literature, but figures prominently in non-academic thinking about authenticity.

influenced by your desires, whereas it is plausible that there is a connection between knowing about other people's desires and being influenced by other people's desires.

Another possibility is that talk of "true selves" is actually talk of "ideal selves" (cf. Frankfurt 1988, pp. 63-4) or simply of better selves, so that when we speak of my "real" desires as opposed to my actual desires, we simply mean the desires that I would have, were I a better person (along some dimension), as opposed to the desires that I actually have, in my present flawed state. Think of an addict who wants to smoke cigarettes but also wants to quit smoking. She might articulate her situation by saying that she does not "really" want to smoke, or that her "true self" does not want to smoke. We'll have more to say about this kind of case, below (§3), but the language of "real" desires and "true selves" is misleading in this case: a more perspicuous account would simply say that the addict wants to smoke, but thinks (or knows) that it would be better for her if she did not want to smoke. But if we articulate the notion of "real" desires or of the "true self" in this way, then these notions can't be used to plausibly define a species of *authenticity*. It would be better for the addict if she did not want to smoke. But that is orthogonal to the question of whether she would be more authentic, more true to herself, if she did not want to smoke.

A third possibility is that the distinction between "real" and actual desires can be articulated in terms of "wholeheartedness"; we'll consider this idea below (§3).

2.2 Self-inquiry and the "true self"

In the absence of some reason to posit a connection between knowledge of your desires and avoiding pretense (§2.1), we have no reason to think that there would be a connection between inquiry about your desires and avoiding pretense. Indeed, as we shall argue, there are reasons to think that self-inquiry can be unreliable vis-à-vis the goal of authenticity, at least when one adopts the language of "true" and "false" selves.⁷ The species of self-inquiry relevant to authenticity, on this conception, will be inquiry that seeks knowledge of your "true self."

On the conception of the "true self" we discussed above (§2.1), your actual self is inauthentic, and the quest for authenticity requires finding your "true self." There is an alternative conception, on which your "true self" is who you actually are, and the preservation of authenticity requires avoiding "false selves." We'll consider this alternative conception first, and then return to the previous conception.

On the alternative conception, the worry that arises in connection with self-inquiry is that we are prone to error when it comes to distinguishing our "true self" from various "false selves." It is easy for a poseur to think that she is being true to herself, and, even more importantly, it is easy for a perfectly authentic person to think that she is a poseur. Seeking knowledge of who you "really are" can easily precipitate a crisis of identity; the problem with such crises is that they can just as easily result in your coming falsely to believe that your actual self is an inauthentic performance, or that some pretense reflects your "true self," than in your arriving at self-knowledge. It isn't just that inquiry is

⁷ Compare Sarah Broadie (1994): "[R]eflection might be positively harmful, for once we start to think and to discuss the good, we can make intellectual mistakes about it and be led off the right practical track. It may be that for fallible human beings ethical self-reflection is a luxury which we cannot safely afford." (p. 5)

fallible: it's that a particular species of inquiry, namely, inquiry about one's "true self," is not only fallible but, at least in many cases, unreliable.⁸

Over and above these epistemic worries, self-inquiry of this kind also has the potential to change the object at which it is directed in negative ways. Inquiry about who we "really are" often leads to doubt and skepticism about whether our actual self is a "false self," about whether what feels most authentic to us is in fact an elaborate pretense. Such doubt can transform an intuitively authentic person into a person wracked with self-doubt and confusion about "who she really is." Think here of the teenager's "existential crisis." Perhaps such eudaimonic costs are the wages of epistemic virtue, to the extent that self-knowledge is risky vis-à-vis authenticity, but we sought to explain the value of self-knowledge by appeal to the value of authenticity. If the present argument is sound, the value of authenticity doesn't explain the value of self-knowledge.

Let's return to the previous conception of the "true self," on which your actual self is not your "true self." The same kind of worry applies here: we are prone to error when we seek knowledge of who we "really are." It is all too easy to become convinced that a particular project or lifestyle or set of values reflects your "true self." The difficulty here flows from the present conception of the relationship between your actual self and your "true self": you can't find out who you really are by introspection or by reflecting on your behavior, because your actual self isn't your "true self." Inquiry about who we "really are," on the present conception, can be unreliable as a result of the fact that we are unable to rely on these traditional sources of self-knowledge, and as such we are left open to wishful thinking and the suggestions of charismatic gurus. And the metaphysical obscurity of the "true self," on this conception (§2.1), is at least one source of these epistemological problems.⁹

Again, we can be changed in negative ways by inquiry about our "true selves." On the present conception of the relationship between the actual self and the "true self," the worry is that inquiry about who we really are can lead to pretense. Think here of a wealthy bohemian, who mimics poverty as a result of self-inquiry, taking herself to have finally discovered her "true self."

We are not here challenging the idea that self-inquiry might often lead to knowledge of one's "true self." What we have argued is that self-inquiry can be unreliable vis-à-vis such knowledge. The connection between self-inquiry and authenticity is obscure.

3 Authenticity as wholeheartedness

Michael Lynch (2004) writes:

[T]o live an *authentic* life, you must *identify* with those desires that effectively guide your action. You identify with a desire when it

⁸ In this section (and in §5.4) we appeal to contingent premises about human psychology. These premises could therefore be challenged by appeal to empirical evidence. In the absence of any such evidence, however, we see no reason to doubt these intuitive premises.

⁹ For the purposes of this paper, we set aside the question of whether knowledge of "true self" is possible. If it is not, then the value of such self-knowledge seems doubtful (cf. §1.4). To the extent that such knowledge is possible, our view is that self-inquiry is an unreliable means to knowledge of "true self."

reflects the kind of person you wish to be, what you care about. [...] I am ... true to myself ... when I identify with my effective desires. When I do, I can then be ... “wholehearted” in my commitment to my actions. (p. 125)

This notion of wholeheartedness derives from the work of Harry Frankfurt (1988, 1998, 2004). It is designed to provide a non-metaphorical and rigorous articulation of some of the intuitive ideas that might be expressed by talking about your “real” desires or your “true self.” (§1) Following Lynch, we’ll ignore a few subtleties of Frankfurt’s views here, in favor of simpler articulations of these notions, but what we say can be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to Frankfurt’s more elaborate conceptions of wholeheartedness and caring.

So, for Lynch, a person is authentic to the extent that she is wholehearted. More exactly, you are **authentic** to the extent that your actions are authentic, and your actions are authentic to the extent that you are wholehearted in performing them. You are **wholehearted** in performing some action when you identify with the desires that move you to act. You are inauthentic to the extent that you are moved to act by desires with which you do not identify.

What is identification? It is difficult to provide an adequate definition (cf. Frankfurt 1988, Chapter 5), although the notion has some intuitive appeal: to identify with a desire is to endorse or accept or embrace it; it is incompatible with being alienated from that desire as something “external”; it is a matter of taking the desire to be “really” yours.¹⁰ For our purposes here we can avoid the controversial question of the nature of identification, by following Frankfurt and Lynch in taking identification to have a constitutive connection to caring. We shall assume the following: that S’s desire to Φ constitutes an instance of **caring** iff S identifies with her desire to Φ (cf. Frankfurt 1998, p. 160-1).¹¹ Given this conception of caring, we can re-state Lynch’s account of authenticity without using the notion of identification: you are **authentic** to the extent that your actions are authentic, and your actions are authentic to the extent that you are moved to act by what you care about; and you are inauthentic to the extent that you are moved to act by desires that do not constitute instances of caring.

¹⁰ According to a simple **passive account of identification**, a person identifies with her desire to Φ iff she desires that she desire to Φ . Frankfurt argues that this account is inadequate: identification requires more than a (passive) higher-order attitude, it requires something active. “[B]y making a certain kind of *decision*,” Frankfurt writes, “the relation of the person to his passions is established.” (1988, p. 68, my emphasis) Identification is something that a person *does*, on this view, and is not merely a matter of a person’s conative states. When someone identifies with some desire of his, he will “make up his mind” about which of his desires he sides with (1988, p. 174). The notion of actively “making up one’s mind” would need to be spelled out further, but once this is done, we would have an **active account of identification**.

¹¹ We assume no theory of desire, nor any claim about its direction of fit. We make two assumptions about desire (and thus about caring). First, we assume that it is possible, and indeed not abnormal or atypical, for someone to desire to Φ without knowing that she desires to Φ . Second, we assume that desire is characteristically manifested in action – i.e. that desires are motivational states – but leave open the question of the extent to which this exhausts or is part of the essence of desire.

Given this conception of authenticity, is there any connection, either constitutive or causal, between self-knowledge and authenticity? The relevant species of self-knowledge here is knowledge of what I care about; complete self-knowledge, of the relevant species, would be knowledge that I care about x , for all x that I care about. In this section we criticize Lynch's constitutive account of the connection between authenticity and self-knowledge (§3.1), and then argue that a causal account is not plausible (§3.2).

3.1 Lynch's constitutive account

Lynch (2004) argues that a species of self-knowledge is valuable because it is partly constitutive of authenticity, which in turn is partly constitutive of wellbeing. "[N]ot only does life go better when you care about something," argues Lynch, "you also need to know that you do." (p. 126) The person who does not know what he cares about "must – to some extent – lack control over himself." (Ibid.) So, the argument goes, "[i]f you don't know which of your possibly conflicting desires you identify with, you cannot be acting authentically." (Ibid.) And thus "knowing what matters to you is partly constitutive of authenticity." (Ibid.) Given this conception of the relationship between authenticity and self-knowledge, and assuming the value of authenticity (understood as wholehearted action), we can explain the value of self-knowledge. Authenticity is valuable, self-knowledge is partly constitutive of authenticity, therefore self-knowledge is valuable.¹²

We'll argue that Lynch's account of the value of self-knowledge fails. Wholeheartedness – i.e. identification with those desires that *do* move you to act, i.e. being moved to act by what you care about – does not require knowledge of what you care about, and is therefore not partly constituted by knowledge of what you care about.¹³ To put this point another way, and as Frankfurt makes clear (1988, p. 162), it is easy to care about something without knowing that you care about it. Consider someone who does not know that she cares about etiquette. She may even believe that she doesn't care about etiquette. However, violations of etiquette make her uncomfortable, and she resents people who are knowingly impolite. Reflection on this might make her realize that she cares about etiquette.

Indeed, it is easy to be moved to act by what you care about, even when you're ignorant of what you care about: imagine following the Boston Celtics progress over the course of a season with what you took to be indifference; but when the Celtics win the NBA Finals you are elated and jump up out of your seat. Up to this point you did not realize that you cared about basketball.¹⁴ Your action – jumping up out of your seat – is motivated by what you care about, but not by something you know you care about. Your jumping out

¹² Lynch's argument assumes that the parts of a valuable whole are themselves valuable. This assumption could be challenged, but we grant it for the sake of argument.

¹³ In other words, identification does not require knowledge of identification. We leave open the question of whether identification, on the active account, requires cognition of some kind or other. Frankfurt suggests that it doesn't: in ambivalence "what is divided is neither a person's reason nor his affects, but his will." (1998, p. 98-9)

¹⁴ We do not mean to imply that the fan's behavior, in this instance, is conclusive evidence that she cares about basketball.

of your seat is wholehearted, but you lack self-knowledge. And, intuitively, this is a case of authentic action without self-knowledge.¹⁵

Cases of rational akrasia (Audi 1990, Arpaly 2003) can be cases of wholeheartedness without self-knowledge. Oliver Single (Arpaly 2003, pp. 3-8, from John LeCarré's novel *Single and Single*) is torn between conscience and loyalty: his father's firm is involved in organized crime, and he has the opportunity – which his conscience tells him he ought to take – to defect to the side of the law. When it comes time to defect, Single acts with alienation: he reaches for the telephone, preparing to betray his father, but “his arm reaches out for it unbidden, his hand grasps it and puts it to his ear, leaving him with the responsibility of what to say.” (p. 4) Single does not know what he cares about, for he does not know whether his conscience or his loyalty will move him to act: “Something amazing is about to happen to him and he is eager to find out what it will be.” (Ibid.) Single's action allows him to *learn* what he cares about: moral principle, rather than familial loyalty. Or, alternatively, we might also imagine a version of Oliver Single where Single isn't akratic but rather, where, antecedent to his reaching for the phone, there is no fact of the matter about what he cares about. In reaching for the phone he *settles* what he cares about (thus “making up his mind”), though he may only ever realize that he has done so in hindsight. In both scenarios, Single does not know, when he reaches for the phone, that moral principle is what he cares about, but that is what moves him to act. His action is wholehearted, but Single doesn't know what he cares about. Again, these are, intuitively, cases of authentic action without self-knowledge.

To sum up, wholeheartedness is not partly constituted by self-knowledge (of what you care about). And thus if authenticity is identified with wholehearted action, authenticity is not partly constituted by self-knowledge, and Lynch's argument is unsound.

Perhaps caring always involves at least *implicit* self-knowledge. Bennett Helm (2001) argues that “valuing something and so identifying with it just means finding it to be central to the kind of person it is worth one's being,” (p. 105) and thus caring¹⁶ requires “an understanding of the kind of person one finds worth being,” (p. 101) i.e. a species of self-knowledge. But this self-knowledge need not be conscious or explicit. Helm asks us to consider the case of Betty (pp. 102-3), a devoted and subservient housewife who has internalized the value of subordination to the needs of others, such that she finds anything other than such subordination shameful. Helm argues that:

[I]t would seem unnecessary to require that Betty has explicitly thought the matter through and self-consciously endorsed this subservient role as part of her identity in order for her to value it [i.e. care about it]. Rather ... we can make sense of the self-understanding [required for caring], the concern with herself and her motives for action, to be implicit in her felt evaluations. (p. 103)

¹⁵ We deny that authenticity, understood as wholehearted action, requires knowledge of what you care about. We do not deny that authenticity sometimes manifests knowledge (even self-knowledge). For example, the action of the basketball fan (above) manifests her knowledge that the Celtics won the Finals. Moreover, the resentment of the person who cares about etiquette (above) manifests her knowledge that the rules of etiquette have been broken.

¹⁶ Helm uses “valuing” here, but he means what we mean by “caring”; for him “caring” does not require identification (2001, pp. 100-1).

We agree that caring does not require conscious or explicit self-knowledge. But we disagree that “self-understanding” is always implicit in “the projectible, rational patterns of reflexive felt evaluations constitutive of one’s values.” (p. 105) To see this, consider paradigm cases of tacit knowledge. In such cases we feel compelled to posit tacit knowledge, in order to explain some actions, cognitions, or emotions of some agent. Consider someone who unreflectively navigates the streets of her native city, without consciously or explicitly representing its geography; given her ability to navigate, we feel compelled to posit implicit knowledge of the city’s geography. And just as knowing can be implicit, caring – in our sense, where this does not require self-knowledge – can be implicit. In the case of the person who (unknowingly) cares about etiquette, given her emotional responses to violations of etiquette, we feel compelled to posit implicit caring about etiquette; in the case of the person who (unknowingly) cares about basketball, given her emotional response to the Celtics’ win, we feel compelled to posit implicit caring about basketball. In exactly the same way, given Betty’s negative emotional response to the idea of insubordination, we feel compelled to posit implicit care for her subordinate role. But there is no felt compulsion to posit implicit self-knowledge, in Betty’s case (nor is there in the etiquette and basketball cases). We needed to posit implicit knowledge, in the geography case, because we would be unable to explain the agent’s actions otherwise – how is she able to navigate, without some implicit representation of the layout of the city? But in Betty’s case, there is no need to posit implicit self-understanding (i.e. knowledge of that fact that her subordinate role is central to her self-worth) to explain her pattern of emotional responses, since this pattern is sufficiently explained by her implicit care (in our sense) for her subordinate role. There is no need to posit, in addition to such implicit care (in our sense), the kind of self-understanding that Helm suggests is required for caring.¹⁷ Caring, therefore, does not require self-knowledge: it is possible for some value to *be* central to the kind of person it is worth one’s being, without one *finding* that value to be thus central.

To make better sense of Lynch’s argument, we might consider alternative conceptions of identification and wholeheartedness. We might say that a person **self-consciously identifies** with her desire to Φ iff she identifies with her desire to Φ and knows that she so identifies. Wholeheartedness defined in terms of self-conscious identification is **self-conscious wholeheartedness**. Note that self-conscious wholeheartedness entails wholeheartedness, and that self-knowledge *is* partly constitutive of self-conscious wholeheartedness.

Above, following Frankfurt, we identified caring with having a desire with which you identify. It is not plausible to identify caring with having a desire with which you self-consciously identify. This is because, as we noted above, you can care about something without knowing that you care about it. If caring required self-conscious identification, then it would difficult to care about something without knowing that you care about it.

Why think that self-conscious wholeheartedness is eudaimonically valuable? If authenticity is identified with self-conscious wholeheartedness, why think that

¹⁷ As noted above, we merely deny that authenticity requires knowledge of what you care about. As with the etiquette and basketball cases (above), authenticity may manifest self-knowledge: Betty’s shame, for example, might manifest her knowledge that she has violated a social norm of submissiveness. What we deny is that her shame (and the rest of her pattern of emotional response) necessarily manifests knowledge that she cares about said social norm.

authenticity is eudaimonically valuable? In particular, why think that self-conscious wholeheartedness is eudaimonically valuable over and above mere wholeheartedness, given that self-conscious wholeheartedness entails mere wholeheartedness? This would not be a problem were we not attempting to *explain* the value of self-knowledge. On the one hand, suppose that self-conscious wholeheartedness is no more eudaimonically valuable than mere wholeheartedness. Then the addition of self-knowledge has added nothing of value. On the other hand, suppose that self-conscious wholeheartedness is more eudaimonically valuable than mere wholeheartedness. Why is this the case? If we assume the additional value of self-conscious wholeheartedness, then we will have done nothing to explain the value of self-knowledge. What is needed is an account of the additional value of self-conscious wholeheartedness, over and above that of mere wholeheartedness.

Lynch provides a clue for how to develop such an account, in the idea that inauthentic actions involve a lack of self-control (p. 126). We shall assume here that a person acts authentically when she is moved to act by desires with which she self-consciously identifies, and that she acts inauthentically otherwise. There are therefore two ways a person can act inauthentically: she may be moved to act by a desire D with which she does not identify, or she may be moved to act by a desire D with which she does identify, but where she does not *know* that she identifies with D. In other words, a person's actions may be inauthentic because her actions are not wholehearted, and therefore not self-consciously wholehearted, or they may be inauthentic because they are wholehearted, but not self-consciously wholehearted. Lynch's argument then requires two premises: (i) that a person has self-control only if her actions are authentic, and (ii) that self-control is eudaimonically valuable. For the purposes of our critique, we shall take premise (i) as a stipulation about a certain species of self-control. Our question, then, is whether premise (ii) is true.

Lynch defends the value of self-control by comparing inauthenticity to "not knowing at which stop you should get off a train":

You realize that one of the stops is where you are going, the one that is important to you. But since you don't know which one that is, every stop becomes equally important or unimportant. [...] If you don't know what you care about, you must either choose something and act *as if* you care about it, or simply remain adrift in indecision. In neither case are you in control, and in neither case can your actions intuitively be said to be authentic expressions of what matters most to you. (p. 126)

However, Lynch's analogy doesn't work. What is bad about not knowing where to get off the train is that you are likely to miss your stop: if you ignorantly choose to alight, you are likely to alight at the wrong stop; if you ignorantly choose to remain on the train, you are likely to miss your stop. Consider the person whose actions are wholehearted, but not self-consciously wholehearted. She cares about certain people, projects, and ideals, and she is moved to act by those cares. Her actions are consistently and systematically performed in the service of the people, projects, and ideals that she cares about. She is not at all like the ignorant train passenger, who runs a great risk of failing to alight at the proper stop. The merely wholehearted person is more like a train passenger who is unaware that she knows which stop is hers, but who nevertheless will, or is likely to, get off at the right stop. She is like someone whose instincts guide her actions, while she remains ignorant that her actions are so guided. Think here of the amnesiac Jason Bourne, who knows how to fight, but does not know that he knows how

to fight. When the time comes to fight, he doesn't "remain adrift in indecision," but rather fights with brutal effectiveness. His actions are inauthentic, in the present sense, but what's bad about such inauthenticity? Not, we submit, the fact that Bourne's actions are ineffectual or incompetent, like those of someone who does not know which stop is hers on the train.

Consider, again, Oliver Single. By hypothesis, he lacks self-conscious wholeheartedness; he does not know what he cares about. Is Single's action an expression of what matters most to him? We imagined that Single is wholehearted: moral principle is what he cares about, not family loyalty. But in this case, his action *is* an expression of what matters most to him. What matters most to him, he has discovered, is moral principle. Single was moved to act by what he cared about. He just did not know, in advance of his action, what he cared about. Lynch claims that the inauthentic person must either act in bad faith, by pretending to care about something, or else "remain adrift in indecision." But the person who lacks self-conscious wholeheartedness need not lack wholeheartedness: she may care about certain people, projects, and ideals, and those cares may move her to act, even while she lacks knowledge of what she cares about.

We have failed to find an account of the additional value of self-conscious wholeheartedness, over and above that of mere wholeheartedness. We have therefore failed to find an explanation of the value of self-knowledge that appeals to the value of authenticity.

3.2 A causal account

For Lynch (2004), the relationship between self-knowledge and authenticity is constitutive (p. 123 and *passim*), but we could conceive of the relationship between self-knowledge and authenticity as causal (§1.3). Let's continue to assume a conception of authenticity on which for your actions to be authentic is for you to be moved to act by, and only by, what you care about. We might then argue that a generally reliable means of making it the case that you are moved to act by what you care about is to *know* what you care about. In other words, we might argue that knowing what you care about is a generally reliable means of making it the case that your actions are authentic.

You do not need to know what you care about to be moved to act by what you care about. That was the point of the case of the unknowing basketball fan and the case of Oliver Single. Caring is a species of desiring, and desires can motivate action regardless of whether you are aware of them. So knowing what you care about is not required for being moved to act by what you care about. Moreover, such cases do not strike us as particularly rare or unusual. So it is not the case that, in general, you must know what you care about to be moved to act by what you care about. Moreover, knowing that you don't care about something is no guarantee that you will not be moved to act by your desire for that thing: even though you are alienated from your desire to smoke, i.e. even though you know that you do not care about smoking, you still smoke. And knowing that you care about something is no guarantee against akrasia: you know that you care about your health, but you can't resist the lure of a double cheeseburger. So it is not the case that, in general, knowing what you care about keeps you from being moved to act by desires that do not amount to cares.

When it comes to the question of the value of self-knowledge, we must ask whether knowing what you care about is *more* reliable, vis-à-vis the goal of authentic action, than not knowing what you care about. This depends on whether knowing what you care

about improves your chances of being moved to act by what you care about, over and above your chances of being so moved in ignorance of what you care about. And this hinges on (i) whether you are more likely to be moved to act by something that you know you care about, than by something that you merely care about, and (ii) whether you are more likely not to be moved to act by something that you desire but know you don't care about, than by something that you desire but merely don't care about.

It is tempting to think that someone who does not know what she cares about will not know what to do, either in general or in specific circumstances. Self-ignorance, it seems, will lead to practical ignorance, and so practical knowledge will require self-knowledge. In one sense this is right. Suppose that someone "knows what to do" iff, for some Φ , she knows that she cares about X and that Φ ing is suitable given the importance of X. On that conception of "knowing what to do," knowing what you care about would be useful, if not essential, for knowing what to do. But this is a narrow, intellectual conception of "knowing what to do." Someone could easily not "know what to do," in this sense, and still reliably act in ways that are suitable, given what she cares about. When we imagine someone who doesn't know what to do, we imagine someone confused, torn between various options, or "adrift in indecision," someone who is an ineffective and unreliable agent. The relationship between self-knowledge and avoiding *that* sort of practical ignorance is obscure.

Caring is a species of desiring, and desires are essentially motivationally efficacious. Our question is whether known desires have enhanced motivational efficacy, over and above the efficacy already present. We have failed to find any answer to this question a priori. Reliable connections between self-knowledge and practical knowledge, if they exist, might be defended on empirical grounds, where we might discover individual differences: self-knowledge might improve authentic action in some people but not in others, and people might differ in their ability to act authentically in the absence of self-knowledge. In the absence of such empirical study, the connection between self-knowledge and wholehearted action remains unclear.

4 Authenticity as existential self-knowledge

For Lynch, authenticity has a cognitive component. But given his conception of authenticity, we failed to find a plausible account of the value of self-knowledge. There is a conception of authenticity on which authenticity seems to be almost *entirely* cognitive, one on which a species of self-knowledge not only partially but wholly constitutes authenticity. Existentialist philosophers describe "bad faith" as a species of self-deception in which a person refuses to acknowledge her dual nature as both an objective facticity and a subjective transcendence (Beauvoir 1948, Sartre 1956, 2007). "Good faith," or authenticity, would require honest acceptance of your human condition – i.e. conscious knowledge of your dual nature, without self-deception. So a third possible answer to our question about the nature of authenticity is that a person is authentic just to the extent that she acknowledges her human condition.

The constitutive connection between authenticity and self-knowledge, on this view, is straightforward: the relevant species of self-knowledge is acknowledgement of your human condition, which is both necessary and sufficient for authenticity. Given this conception of authenticity, does the value of authenticity explain the value of self-knowledge? No. Authenticity, on the present conception, *just is* a species of self-knowledge. We cannot *explain* the value of the latter in terms of the former. Indeed, the appeal of authenticity, on the existentialist conception, lies principally in the fact that it is

a species of self-knowledge. It is not that knowledge of your human condition is appealing because this is required for authenticity, on the existentialist conception, but rather that authenticity, on this conception, is appealing because it requires a difficult-to-acquire item of self-knowledge.

This account of the appeal of existentialist authenticity can be broadened to include the appeal of other species of authenticity. Consider someone who seems paradigmatically inauthentic: the *internalized poseur*. The ordinary poseur (§3) pretends to care about something that she knows she doesn't care about, or pretends not to care about something that she knows she cares about. For example, she doesn't care about basketball, and knows that she doesn't care about basketball, but pretends to like basketball, in order to fit in with her friends. The internalized poseur has taken this artifice one step further: she has convinced herself, or has become confused to the point that she now believes, that she cares about basketball. She jumps out of her seat, shouts with what strikes us as feigned excitement, cringes when her "favorite" team loses – but this all seems to us to be a performance, a sham. Even if she now thinks that she loves basketball, "deep down" she really doesn't.

Now part of what is especially irritating about the internalized poseur, we submit, is her lack of self-knowledge, and in particular her ignorance of what she cares about. Her inauthenticity is of a more annoying variety precisely because of the way in which she differs from the ordinary poseur. The ordinary poseur is knowingly and deliberately putting on a performance; the internalized poseur is putting on a performance without even knowing that she is putting on a performance. Indeed, once this is recognized, you might reconsider your intuition that there is anything objectionable (vis-à-vis authenticity) about the ordinary poseur: she wants to fit in with her friends, pretending to like basketball is a means to that end, and so she wisely pretends to like basketball. She "conforms to the demands and expectations of others," but she does so deliberately and knowingly.¹⁸ The internalized poseur, by contrast, seems like an unwitting dupe, whose conformity extends so far that she does not even know that she is conforming.

Thus for some species of inauthenticity – existentialist "bad faith," or the inauthenticity of the internalized poseur – it is more plausible that the disvalue of self-ignorance explains the disvalue of inauthenticity, and that the corresponding species of authenticity are valuable because self-knowledge is valuable.

We can diagnose why these species of inauthenticity might seem especially objectionable to philosophers. Consider what we might call the truth-directed intellectual virtues (which philosophers often defend as cardinal): sincerity and truthfulness (a disposition to speak the truth and not to mislead), accuracy (a disposition to inquire and to cleave to the evidence), and authenticity (understood as self-knowledge, or as requiring self-knowledge). Philosophers, lovers of truth, tend to be attracted to these virtues, and admire those who possess them. Equally, they tend to be repulsed by their corresponding vices, and to despise those who possess them. The person in "bad faith" and the internalized poseur are philosophers' nightmares: insincere and ignorant.¹⁹

¹⁸ Cf. Feldman and Hazlett 2013, §2.

¹⁹ If the value of authenticity derives from the value of self-knowledge, then we face a question of the species of value enjoyed by authenticity. We have assumed so far that the value in question was eudaimonic value (§1.2), but if the value of authenticity derives from the value of self-knowledge, then perhaps authenticity enjoys what philosophers

In any event, on the existentialist conception of authenticity, it is not plausible that the value of authenticity explains the value of self-knowledge.

5 Authenticity as spontaneity

There is a species of authenticity that seems not to require self-knowledge, but rather to require self-ignorance. Authenticity, on this conception, contrasts with a species of inauthenticity characterized by self-consciousness, and in particular self-knowledge of what one loves or cares about. The corresponding species of authenticity is characterized by spontaneity, unselfconsciousness, and by the unreflective expression of what one loves or cares about. This is a fourth possible answer to our question about the nature of authenticity. We'll first argue that authenticity, on this conception, requires self-ignorance (§5.1), and then consider three objections to our argument (§§5.2 – 5.4). We will conclude that the value of self-knowledge conflicts with the value of authenticity, on this conception.

5.1 Self-knowledge and self-consciousness

We need to say more about the species of authenticity we have in mind. Consider **self-conscious Sam**:

Sam is stuck in a dead-end philosophy job in Boringtown, Connecticut. He has recently had a passionate affair with Grace, a visiting speaker from the exotic University of the Mediterranean. Grace has returned home and it's unclear whether they'll ever see each other again. But Sam doesn't want the romance to end. He is tempted to skip town and join Grace at her seaside villa, but knows that this would be the last straw with the tenure committee at Boringtown State College, given his lackluster teaching evaluations and non-existent publication record. So he reflects and introspects, trying to figure out what he cares about: Grace, his career, the romance of a spontaneous European tryst, and so on. He makes a list of "pros" and "cons" for his various options; he ranks various counterfactual scenarios to get a picture of how his preferences stack up. Finally, after much self-investigation, he concludes "I am in love with Grace, therefore I shall go on a tryst," and heads for the airport.

Compare **unselfconscious Sam**: his story is the same, minus the self-investigation and minus the self-knowledge, but with the same resulting action. Rather than making his romantic decision on the basis of self-knowledge, Sam makes his decision spontaneously, not knowing whether it is the right thing to do. In virtue of this ignorance, unselfconscious Sam takes a romantic risk, while self-conscious Sam's action is grounded in self-knowledge.

We can imagine that both self-conscious Sam and unselfconscious Sam are in love with Grace, and that both are moved to act by their love. Neither of their decisions is random or arbitrary. They are both moved to act by what they care about (cf. §3). The difference between them is that self-conscious Sam knows that he loves Grace, and as a

call "epistemic" value – a domain of value having to do with truth, knowledge, and understanding, i.e. with "cognitive contact with reality" (Zagzebski 1996). If the appeal of authenticity is explained by our appetite for the truth-directed intellectual virtues, then we might understand the value of authenticity as "epistemic" value.

result knows (or is in a position to easily know) that his action is so moved. Only he is *knowingly* moved to act by what he cares about. Unselfconscious Sam's romantic action is also based on what he cares about – this much we can see from our third-person perspective – but he doesn't know that it is, since he doesn't know that he loves Grace.

We submit that unselfconscious Sam enjoys a species of intuitively appealing authenticity, which self-conscious Sam lacks. The difference comes down (at least in part) to self-knowledge: unselfconscious Sam lacks self-knowledge, while self-conscious Sam has self-knowledge, and acts on its basis. The relevant species of self-knowledge here is the same as that considered above (§3): knowledge of what you care about. The actions of both characters express what matters most to them (§3); in this sense both are being true to themselves. But unselfconscious Sam's romantic decision is, in a different sense, more authentic than self-conscious Sam's. Unselfconscious Sam's "true self" is manifested "naturally," without the aid of conscious deliberation, whereas self-conscious Sam's "true self" is manifested less directly, with the assistance of rational reflection. Self-conscious Sam's action is motivated by knowledge that he loves Grace; unselfconscious Sam's action is motivated (only) by his love of Grace. This is a difference between being motivated by a cognitive state of self-knowledge and being motivated (only) by a conative state of caring about another person.

To put this another way, self-conscious Sam suffers from having "one thought too many." Bernard Williams (1981) used this phrase to highlight the sense in which being motivated by **impartial** moral thinking is unappealing in the context of interpersonal relationships and other "ground projects." But the same point applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to **self-focused** thinking in the context of interpersonal relationships and other "ground projects": self-focused thinking is unappealing in these contexts. In the case of self-conscious Sam, self-knowledge interferes with a proper focus of his attention on Grace. His action seems less motivated by genuine romantic love for the other, and more by his self-directed concern. There is a kind of genuine love, which self-conscious Sam seems not to have attained, that is not conceptualized as concerning oneself, but rather is wholly concerned with the other.²⁰

The point applies, however, not only to cases of interpersonal relationships. Consider self-conscious Achilles, whose charge into battle is motivated by his knowledge that honor is what he loves most, and unselfconscious Achilles, whose charge into battle is motivated (only) by his love of honor. Self-conscious Achilles' last thought before battle is of himself; unselfconscious Achilles' last thought before battle is of honor. Or consider self-conscious Gandhi, whose hunger strike is motivated by his knowledge that freedom is what he loves most, and unselfconscious Gandhi, whose hunger strike is motivated (only) by his love of freedom. Self-conscious Gandhi bases his actions on the thoughts about himself; unselfconscious Gandhi bases his actions on thoughts about freedom.

²⁰ Our concern is not that Sam's attention is focused on himself *instead of* on Grace, but that the *addition* of self-focus is unappealing in the romantic context. Compare Williams' argument: the worry about having "one thought too many" is not that one will not attend to one's beloved, but that the additional presence of the "one thought too many" is unappealing.

There is a species of authenticity, then, that requires a lack of self-knowledge, in particular knowledge of what you love or care about. Self-knowledge destroys authenticity, on this conception, because the person who knows herself, or who knows herself too well, is incapable of acting unselfconsciously, i.e. without self-knowledge. The extreme of authenticity, on this conception, is the person who is naturally and unreflectively true to herself, who does not think *about* herself, but simply “is herself,” always and without deliberation or reflection. The extreme of inauthenticity, on this conception, is the person who is introspective, self-obsessed, and neurotically self-concerned, who first figures out what action would best express her “true self,” and then acts. But on the present conception of authenticity, such a person is doomed to fail: to “be yourself,” you cannot act on the basis of knowledge of what action would express your “true self.” Anyone who acts on the basis of such self-knowledge is, ipso facto, inauthentic: she is faking it, pretending to “be herself,” acting *like* herself instead of *being* herself.

The relevant species of self-knowledge (knowledge of what you love or care about) is incompatible with this species of authenticity (spontaneity). The value of authenticity, on this conception, cannot explain the value of self-knowledge, because it conflicts with the value of (a species of) self-knowledge.

5.2 Self-consciousness and self-inquiry

Perhaps what is objectionable about self-conscious Sam isn’t his self-knowledge per se, but the *inquiry* that generates it. So perhaps the species of authenticity he lacks doesn’t require self-ignorance, as we argued above (§3.1), but merely the virtuous refusal to seek self-knowledge. Consider the case of **confident Sam**: he is just like self-conscious Sam, except that he enjoys self-knowledge (that he loves Grace) without self-examination, and bases his decision on that knowledge. He doesn’t need to introspect or reflect on the question of whether he loves Grace, he *just knows* that he does. On the present objection, it is self-conscious Sam who strikes us as lacking an appealing species of authenticity, which both confident Sam and unselfconscious Sam enjoy.

We reply that maintaining the value of self-knowledge commits one to the value of self-inquiry, as we assumed above (§1.4). So if self-inquiry is disvaluable (as the present objection concedes), this puts the defender of the value of self-knowledge in a difficult position. She must maintain the value of self-knowledge while discouraging its pursuit. We find this position unappealing, and conclude that the value of self-knowledge conflicts with the value of authenticity, on the present conception.

5.3 Self-consciousness vs. mere self-knowledge

Perhaps what is objectionable about self-conscious Sam isn’t his self-knowledge per se, but the fact that his self-knowledge is conscious or explicit.²¹ The species of authenticity he lacks doesn’t require self-ignorance, but rather a lack of conscious or explicit self-knowledge. Consider the case of **intuitive Sam**, who unconsciously or implicitly knows that he is in love with Grace, and bases his decision on that knowledge. On the present objection, it is self-conscious Sam who strikes us as lacking an appealing species of authenticity, which both intuitive Sam and unselfconscious Sam enjoy.

²¹ This might explain why self-inquiry is disvaluable, whilst self-knowledge is valuable, in virtue of the fact that inquiry is a deliberate activity that results in conscious or explicit knowledge, when successful.

We offer two replies to this objection. First, inquiry is a deliberate activity that paradigmatically results in conscious or explicit knowledge, when successful. So the defender of the present objection is again forced to say that self-knowledge is valuable whilst self-inquiry is disvaluable, which goes against our assumption that the value of self-knowledge commits one to the value of self-inquiry (§1.4). Again, the value of self-knowledge conflicts with the value of authenticity, on the present conception.

Second, we are suspicious of the kind of unconscious or tacit knowledge posited by the present objection (cf. §3.1). By hypothesis, unselfconscious Sam and intuitive Sam are both motivated, by their love of Grace, to perform the same action. What role is being played by Sam's unconscious or tacit self-knowledge? It's obscure what functional difference there is between someone's caring about x and someone's caring about x while unconsciously or tacitly knowing that she cares about x . And if there is no functional difference *and* no phenomenological difference, we find it obscure whether there is any cognitive difference at all.

5.4 Self-consciousness and motivation

Perhaps what is objectionable about self-conscious Sam isn't his self-knowledge per se, but the fact that he *bases* his decision on his knowledge that he loves Grace – and the same, *mutatis mutandis*, when it comes to confident Sam and intuitive Sam. Compare **spontaneous Sam**, who is just like self-conscious Sam, but whose romantic action is not based on his knowledge that he loves Grace. We might describe spontaneous Sam like this: he has the “one thought to many,” but that thought does not motivate his action. On the present objection, it is self-conscious Sam who strikes us as lacking an appealing species of authenticity, which both spontaneous Sam and unselfconscious Sam enjoy.

We reply that self-knowledge of what you care about, for the authentic person, will always be disposed to motivate action. We said that both self-conscious Sam and unselfconscious Sam are moved to act by their love – but there is an important motivational difference between them. Someone can be moved to act by what she cares about in two importantly different ways. Consider someone who cares about x , and is moved to act by this. On the one hand, it might be the case that the only reason for which this person acts is the perceived value or importance of x . However, on the other hand, it might be the case that among the reasons for which this person acts is the fact that she cares about x . This is the sort of motivational profile that self-conscious Sam enjoys. On the present objection, the authentic person, who cares about x , will base her actions only on the value or importance of x , and will not base her actions on the fact that she cares about x . This is why, on the present proposal, authenticity does not require self-ignorance, but merely that self-knowledge (in certain cases) be motivationally impotent.

However, to what extent is it possible for self-knowledge of what you care about to remain motivationally impotent, for the authentic person? To what extent it is possible for someone to act, spontaneously, on the basis of the value or importance of x , whilst knowing that she cares about x , without basing her action on the fact that she cares about x ? We submit that the authentic person will struggle to resist the motivational influence of such self-knowledge. Knowledge of what you care about, like desire, is characteristically motivational. The evidence for this is the fact that cases of ennui – “I know I care about my kids, but I just feel indifferent right now” – are exceptional. So while it may be the case that authenticity, on the present conception, is *compatible* with self-knowledge, we can expect a reliable correlation between self-knowledge and

inauthenticity. The policy of seeking self-knowledge (§2.2) will not be generally reliable vis-à-vis authenticity. And thus the value of self-knowledge conflicts with the value of authenticity, on the present conception.

Compare, again, Williams' worry about impartial moral thinking. The idea there is that your wife would have a complaint if you were to confess that the reason you saved her was that it was your impartial moral duty. Suppose, instead, that you were to insist that while you knew that saving her was your impartial moral duty, this was not a reason for which you acted. One reason this sounds implausible, we propose, is that once one knows that one has a reason to Φ , it is difficult to avoid this reason becoming a reason for which you Φ (if indeed you Φ). It is difficult to recognize a reason and then to quell its motivational force. We can expect a reliable correlation between impartial thinking and impartial motivation.

6 Conclusion

We have considered four species of authenticity:

- Avoiding pretense (§2)
- Frankfurtian wholeheartedness (§3)
- Existential self-knowledge (§4)
- Spontaneity (§5)

We have argued that for each of these species, the value of (that species of) authenticity does not explain the value of (the relevant species of) self-knowledge. The relationship between authenticity and self-knowledge seems, in each case, not to be straightforward, and in no case is an explanation of the value of self-knowledge, that appeals to the value of authenticity, plausible. Moreover, we propose that a certain species of self-ignorance may actually be necessary for authenticity, understood as spontaneity. We conclude that Lynch's suggestion, to explain the value of self-knowledge by appeal to the value of authenticity, is not promising.²²

Simon D. FELDMAN, Connecticut College

Allan HAZLETT, University of Edinburgh

REFERENCES:

- ARPALY, N. 2003, *Unprincipled Virtue: An Inquiry into Moral Agency*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- AUDI, R. 1990, "Weakness of Will and Rational Action," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 68, pp. 270-281.
- BROADIE, S. 1994, *Ethics with Aristotle*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

²² Thanks to our audience, at the University of Connecticut in April of 2012, where we presented this paper, for their many helpful comments, and to our referees. Research on this project was supported by the British Academy and the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

FELDMAN, S.D., forthcoming, *Against Authenticity: Why You Shouldn't Be Yourself*, Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

FELDMAN, S.D., and HAZLETT, A. 2013, "What's Bad About Bad Faith?," *European Journal of Philosophy* 21:1, pp. 50-73.

FRANKFURT, H. 1988, *The Importance of What We Care About*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

----- 1998, *Necessity, Volition, and Love*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

----- 2004, *The Reasons of Love*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

GRECO, J. 2010, *Achieving Knowledge: A Virtue-Theoretic Account of Epistemic Normativity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

GRIMM, S. 2009, "Epistemic Normativity," in: A. Haddock, A. Millar, and D. Pritchard, eds., *Epistemic Value*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 243-64.

HAZLETT, A. 2013, *A Luxury of the Understanding: On the Value of True Belief*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

HELM, B.W. 2001, *Emotional Reason: Deliberation, Motivation, and the Nature of Value*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

KORNBLITH, H. 1993, "Epistemic Normativity," *Synthese* 94, pp. 357-76.

LYNCH, M. 2004, *True to Life: Why Truth Matters*, Cambridge: MIT Press.

PRITCHARD, D. 2010, "Knowledge and Understanding," in: D. Pritchard, A. Millar, and A. Haddock, *The Nature and Value of Knowledge: Three Investigations*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 3-88.

SOSA, E. 2003, "The Place of Truth in Epistemology," in: M. DePaul and L. Zagzebski, eds., *Intellectual Virtue: Perspectives from Ethics and Epistemology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 155-79.

----- 2007, *A Virtue Epistemology: Apt Belief and Reflective Knowledge, Volume 1*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

TAYLOR, C. 1991, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

TRILLING, L. 1972, *Sincerity and Authenticity*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

VELLEMAN, J. D. 2002, "Identification and Identity," in: S. Buss and L. Overton, eds., *Contours of Agency*, Cambridge: MIT Press, pp. 91-123.

WILLIAMS, B. 1981, *Moral Luck*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

WOLF, S. 2010, *Meaning in Life and Why it Matters*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

ZAGZEBSKI, L. 1996, *Virtues of the Mind: An Inquiry into the Nature of Virtue and the Ethical Foundations of Knowledge*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

----- 2003, "Intellectual Motivation and the Good of Truth," in: M. DePaul and L. Zagzebski, eds., *Intellectual Virtue: Perspectives from Ethics and Epistemology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 135-54.

----- 2004, "Epistemic Value and the Primacy of What We Care About," *Philosophical Papers* 33:3, pp. 353-77.